

# COUNTY OF YORK

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 31, 2001 (BOS Mtg. 11/20/01)

**TO:** York County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** James O. McReynolds, County Administrator

**SUBJECT:** Wetlands Interpretive and Educational Center - Land Acquisition

As you know, the County incurred an obligation for wetland mitigation when the Tabb Library was constructed. The Army Corps of Engineers has assigned a current dollar value of \$110,000, which has the potential to increase if mitigation is not satisfied. In addition, the Corps will not issue permits for County utility and other construction projects until this obligation is discharged.

County staff has been working to resolve this matter since last winter. A payment could be made to a "Wetlands Bank". Although that would satisfy the obligation, in staff's opinion that would be an absolute last resort since it would send tax dollars out of the County without bringing any potential benefit to County residents. A collaboration between staff of the Departments of Community Services and Environmental & Developmental Services (EDS) resulted in a conceptual plan for a *Wetlands Interpretive and Educational Center*. This project was proposed to the Corps as mitigation for the wetlands obligation in January. I am delighted to say the Corps has agreed to accept this project as 100% mitigation for the County's obligation. This is an absolutely outstanding staff accomplishment.

### **Project Description and Benefits**

This project proposes:

- 1,100' of stream restoration and downstream drainage improvements
- footbridge and path construction
- wetlands plantings and signage
- on property adjacent to Charles E. Brown Park in Lackey

The project provides substantial benefits in that it:

- satisfies our obligation to the Corps
- provides a Learning Center for middle and high school classes, with both access to the Community Services Center at the Park for lectures and a field site
- adds an educational and recreational amenity for the community
- can be included as a self-guided walking tour in a package for tourism promotions
- allows the investment of public funds to remain in the County
- provides drainage improvements in the surrounding area
- and preserves a small portion of a rapidly disappearing natural resource that helped to define our heritage

### **Property Acquisition**

To accomplish this project, it is necessary to acquire property adjacent to the Park. The County has been offered two parcels of land consisting of approximately 3.08 acres total, which are located to the rear and adjacent to Brown Park. The property can be acquired for \$23,000, which is \$4,000 below the assessed value. This property is owned by Virginia G. Smith and is identified as York County Tax Map parcels 017-75 (located at 210 Maple Road) and as Tax Map number 017-71 (which is adjacent to Parcel 017-75).

A number of resources have been assembled to help defray the County's costs for this project. Bridges have been donated, the Boy Scouts have committed to work on the footpaths, and the Master Gardeners and Tree Stewards will participate in the wetlands plantings. In addition, staff pursued a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program and the County has been awarded \$50,000 toward this project. The outcome of a second grant application for \$20,000 to the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund is pending. Staff projects the costs of the project to be in the vicinity of \$230,000. There is \$60,000 reserved for wetlands mitigation in the Tabb Library construction project account. After grants and in-kind contributions, the balance of the necessary funding would be available through drainage and contingency funds.

### **Recommendation**

The *Wetlands Interpretive and Educational Center* brings various benefits to the County. Perhaps most importantly, it satisfies the wetlands mitigation obligation and assures the County's future ability to secure necessary permits from the Army Corps of Engineers. Staff has secured a number of resources to defray overall costs. Acquisition of property is an essential element of this project. The approximately 3.08 acres adjacent to Charles E. Brown Park is ideally situated and is offered at \$23,000, which is \$4,000 less than the assessed value. I recommend that the Board adopt resolution R01-198 to authorize the purchase of these parcels.

Smith/4110

### **Attachments**

- Resolution R01-198
- Plats